

# Hands-On Product Review: Rogue Electric Guitars

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**Beautiful, playable, affordable, lovable**

*By Daniel Vincennes*

If you explore the Musician's Friend website, you will see that their corporate headquarters are located in Medford, Oregon, in the Rogue Valley. The Rogue is a river that flows from Central Oregon out to the Pacific. And Rogue is the name that Musician's Friend has chosen for its house brand of instruments. The word rogue has several other cool meanings: In literature, a lovable rogue, or scamp, is a character who is also a rascal, a little outrageous and mischievous with a bit of charm. A recent example of a lovable rogue is the character Sawyer on the TV series Lost. Rogue is also a member of the X-Men. She's a mutant who absorbs the memories and strength of anyone she comes into contact with.

To come up with products to carry the Rogue brand name, Musician's Friend works with a variety of manufacturers who build instruments to their design and specifications. Over the years, the Rogue name has graced amps, PAs, effects pedals, strings, cases and gig bags, guitars, basses, ukuleles, mandolins, banjos, and an electric sitar. The idea behind Rogue-branded instruments is to offer good quality instruments at a more than reasonable price. One example is the Rogue Starter Acoustic Guitar, which sells for a few dozen dollars. Since customers set their expectations in line with the low price, they are pleasantly surprised at how well the guitar sounds and plays.

## Standing apart

Lately, Musician's Friend has had only one Rogue electric guitar, which was offered in a combination pack with an amp. Now there are four new Rogue electric guitars with features that guitarists ask for that are usually found only on instruments costing much more. These features include a compound-radius neck, Grover tuning keys, and Bill Turner-designed pickups. These new Rogue guitars are definitely not "me too" models—they live up to their name by standing apart from the herd. The four models in the new Rogue lineup are the Rogue HH, Rogue Lipstick, Rogue HH Ash, and Rogue HH Ash Set-Neck.

HH & Lipstick Electric Guitars

## Rogue HH

This guitar sets the baseline for the Rogue series. The one-piece maple neck has a rosewood fingerboard. The neck is solidly bolted onto the one-piece ergonomically designed mahogany body that is scooped in the back. The thin profile neck has jumbo frets for easy note bending. The compound radius fretboard is more curved near the nut (12" radius) making it easier to play chords while a flatter curve (13-1/3" radius) in the upper frets allows bending notes without the string "fretting out." HH stands for the two humbucking pickups designed by Bill Turner. Bill has quite a distinguished history in pickup design. He was the co-founder of EMG Electronics, then moved to Fender where he helped design Fender's Noiseless pickups, the DeArmond line of pickups, the LSR nut, and the reworked humbucker for the Telecaster Deluxe reissue. The humbuckers on the Rogue HH feature Bill's initials on the black and cream bobbins. As a kicker, the Rogue electrics have dual strap buttons on the butt-end of the guitar. This setup provides two benefits: you can easily adjust the strap length, and when you set the guitar on its end, it's less prone to fall over. The Rogue HH Ash

is the same as the HH with a one-piece ash body. The Rogue Ash Set-Neck model provides more string-to-pickup resonance, which means more sustain.

## **Rogue Lipstick**

This racy little devil sports frisky-sounding lipstick tube single-coil pickups for a biting, twangy blast from the past. There's no pickguard on the one-piece mahogany body to diminish the shimmer of the retro sparkle finish. It's a cool looking guitar perfect for rowdy rockabilly or some flashy country pickin'.

## **Test drive**

I took the Rogue HH Ash for a test spin. Right out of the box, the guitar was set up and ready to go. The tobacco brown finish is described as an Open Pore Vintage Burst that lets the natural grain of the body show through and contrasts nicely with the cream bobbins and pickup rings. The contoured body was well balanced and fit snugly against my waist. The contoured neck felt smooth and slender in my hands while the jumbo frets gave me lots of room to push notes around on the fretboard. The five-position pickup switch offered a wide range of humbucker and single-coil pickup sounds thanks to coil splitting. Running the Rogue HH Ash through a vintage tube amp, I got mellow jazz tones from the neck pickup, country-rock tones from both pickups, and slabs of crunchy chords and steamy leads from the bridge pickup. In addition to offering the standard, bridge, bridge/neck, and neck pickup selections, pickup position #2 combines a single-coil from both the bridge and neck pickup for that brilliant, retro-twangy sound. Position #4 puts the neck pickup coils in parallel, resulting in a slightly lower output with more brilliance and clarity on the high end than you would normally get from a humbucker.

HH Ash Set-Neck & HH Ash Electric Guitars

## Overall

The Rogue HH Ash is great as an everyday, go-anywhere electric guitar or as a back-up guitar to your main axe. For players looking for an inexpensive, great-playing instrument loaded with features that are visually appealing, these Rogues can truly be lovable.

### Features common to all Rogue Lipstick and HH guitars:

???	Maple neck
???	Compound radius: 12" (1st fret); 13-1/3" (12th fret); 13-1/4" (22nd fret)
???	Rosewood fingerboard
???	22 jumbo frets
???	Chrome hardware
???	Dual strap buttons at butt of guitar for selectable strap adjustment
???	Adjustable bridge with anchored tailpiece
???	Grover tuning machines
???	Dome-style master volume/tone knobs
???	Staggered tuners on headstock
???	9 - 42-gauge strings
	5-position switch with specialized switching combinations:
???	Position 1: bridge pickup
???	Position 2: single-coil from bridge and middle pickup
???	Position 3: bridge and middle pickup
???	Position 4: neck pickup parallel
???	Position 5: neck pickup

### Rogue Lipstick features:

???	One-piece mahogany body
???	Single-coil lipstick bar pickups
???	No pickguard

??? Red, blue or silver sparkle retro finish

**Rogue HH features:**

??? One-piece mahogany body  
??? Bolt-on neck  
??? Custom-designed Bill Turner open-coil humbucking pickups  
??? Black pickup bobbins  
??? Adjustable pickup pole pieces  
??? 3-ply black pickguard  
??? Brown pearloid tuning keys  
??? Aged dot fingerboard inlays  
??? Black, blue metallic or arctic white finish  
??? View our pickup switching diagram for more details

**Rogue HH Ash features — same as HH with:**

??? One-piece ash body  
??? Black and cream pickup bobbins with BT initials on the bobbins  
??? Cream pickup rings  
??? 3-ply brown shell pickguard and matching brown truss rod cover  
??? Tobacco sunburst: OPVB (open pore vintage burst) or natural glossy finish

**Rogue HH Ash Set-Neck — same as HH Ash with:**

??? Set maple neck